

A quick dip: Visions of Chapter 5, The Flying Scroll & Image of Babylon



There are two visions that I'd like to mention, although they are not covered within a sermon. They will be helpful for us when we get to a study of the Revelation shared by John. (The last book in the Bible)

Between the visions we cover in sermons 1 and 2 there is a vision of a flying scroll and then a woman in a basket being carried by two women.

The Flying Scroll: An Image of Two Kingdoms...

The flying scroll is shown to Zechariah as a document that describes the Word of the Lord, not as a blessing in this instance but as a curse! Sounds harsh, doesn't it?

It reminds me of the time when half the people of the tribes of Israel gathered at Mount Gerizim and the other half at Mount Ebal. Those at Gerizim heard the blessings and those at Ebal the curses. (See Deut. 11:29 & Joshua 8:33-35)

We always like to focus on God's blessings, but we do need to be reminded that we always have both choices: to accept and follow the Lord (blessings) or to reject him, which is to live instead under the curse over the world. Those who reject God's Kingdom, even if they acknowledge God but refuse to follow his ways are making a decision to stay under the sovereignty of the thief's kingdom.

Jesus later shares a similar image saying, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10NIV)

In the image of the flying scroll the people of the thief's kingdom are those who steal from the kingdom of God and swear falsely by the Lord. How does anyone steal from the Kingdom of God? We ask. Jesus clarified that in his rebuke of the teachers of the law (see Matthew 23:13-39). Their job was to teach the people about the Kingdom of God and to invite them into it, but many focussed instead on details of the law and giving to the Temple in Jerusalem.

As we study the book of Zechariah we can see that when the temple was destroyed all the people had was the scriptures. And when the temple was rebuilt (though less grand than Solomon's one) the teachers of the law (of

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Moses) loved that symbolism so much that it became an idol to them, as being more important than the ways of grace and mercy -the Kingdom of Blessing- that they should have sought.

The scroll highlights once again that ultimately there are just two kingdoms and serves as warning to the people of Zechariah's time to seek and follow the Creator Lord, in whom eternal life is found.

The woman in the Basket

Likewise, the kingdom of fallen humanity is represented by Babylon. A woman in a basket represents the adulterous generations who persist in giving their worship to anything or anyone other than God and the two, angel-like women carrying the basket represent messengers of God's Kingdom.ⁱ

In Zechariah's time Babylon had already fallen to the Persians but nonetheless, it is an image used by the Lord such as when Jesus defames the adulterous generations who ask him for a sign (e.g., Matt. 16:4) and also in Revelation (18:4) where God's people are told to run away from Babylon - the Kingdom of fallen man and into the Kingdom of God.

Babylon is symbolic as a false temple, whereas the next vision shows that the Lord will build his own temple, both in the time of Zechariah and, most importantly, a new temple in the future that he builds himself.

ⁱ Though there is some debate about who the two women with wings like storks are (God's angels or those of the wicked kingdom like the woman in the basket), it is interesting to note that women were already recognised as being used to either represent adultery (See Proverbs 7) or wisdom (see Proverbs 31). Wisdom. Throughout Proverbs wisdom is described using feminine language, e.g., 'do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you.' (Prov.4:6 NIV)